THE
Christians Comfort:
OR,
The Goodness and Mercy of God unto his Children in their Greatest Misery.

SHEWING;

The Benefit of Affliction;

And how to Husband it so, that the weakest Christian with Blessing from Above, may be able to support himself in his most miserable Exigents,

---

Very full of Heavenly Consolation.

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Christians Comfort:
OR,
The Goodness and Mercy of God unto his Children in their Greatest Misery.

It is good for me that I was afflicted.

The point of Doctrine which I shall observe from these Words, is this.

'Tis for the Benefit and Advantage, for the Spiritual and Everlasting good of Gods Children that they are afflicted: for the proof hereof to make the same more clear, I shall give you a demonstration of several particular advantages, which the people of God gain by their Afflictions.

In the first place, they are a notable means to rouze them out of careless se-

curity, and bring them to Repentance, Job 33. 16, 17. God openeth the Ears of Men even by their Corrections, that he might cause man to turn away from his enterprize, and that he might keep back his Soul from the Pit. Our afflictions are as Benhadads Counsellours, that sent him with a Cord about his Neck to the mercifull King of Israel. The Church of God under the Crosse is brought to a serious Consideration of her estate, and saith: Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord, Lam. 3. 40. Affliction is the Hammer which breaks our Rocky Hearts, adversity hath whipt many a Soul to Heaven, which otherwise Prosperity had couched to Hell: was not the Prodigal riding post thither till he was soundly lasht home again to his fathers house by those hard hearted and pitiesse Mabalis which refused to fill his Belly with the Husks of the Swine: and indeed seldome is any Man awakened from the sleep of Sin but by Affliction: for as Aloes kills worms in the stomach, or as Frost and Cold destroys Vermin, so doth bitter Afflictons crawling Lusts in the Heart: my wants saith one kills my Wantonnesse, my Poverty checks

my

my Pride, my being slighted quells my Ambition and vain Glory, and as for Sicknesse it cuts the Throat of Vices; yea how many will confesse that one Affliction hath done more good upon them, then many Sermons that they have Learned, more good in one Days or Weeks misery, than many years Prosperity could teach them: Repentance seldome meets a man in jollity, but in affliction the Heart is made pliable and ready for all good Impressions. True, if Gentlenesse would serve, we should not smart, for God like a good Chirurgeon first strokes the Arm before he opens the Vein. He sends for us by his Ambassadours the Ministry, yet we come not. Let him fire our field, as Absolom did by Joab, we come presently: when singing will not still the Child, the Rod must: hard knots, must have hard wedges, strong affections, strong afflictions, great corruptions, great Calamities to cure them. Affliction is but the Shepheards Dog to fetch us into Christs Fold, perhaps by Barking onely, and then we are more scared then hurt, perhaps in his Mouth, and the poor Sheep thinks surely he will worry it, but he is taught to fetch onely,

and therefore gripes not, but only carrys it, and delivers it to his Master, when Children have done a fault Mothers use to fright them with Bullbeggars, the Child thinks surely they will have him, but the Mother hath a double policy: Viz. To make them hate the fault and love them the better, for they run to the Lap to hide them, and then will she make her own Conditions, and so the very end which God aims at in setting those Adders upon thee, is that thou shouldst turn thine Eyes inward, that thou may see, for what thou sufferest, pry narrowly into thine own foregast actions, which if thou dost, a hundred to one thou will find sin, it may be this very sin the cause of thy present affliction, & until thou dost sift & try thine own heart, & find out which is thy beloved sin look for no release, wherefore let this Correction bring forth Conversion, cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purifie your hearts ye double minded, Jam. 4. 8. Not your Hands onely with Pilate, but your Hearts with David, yea & your Eyes too with Mary Magdalen, if it be possible, though dry Sorrow may be as good as wet, whose Eyes were a Laver, and Hair a Towel to wash

and

and wipe the feet of Christ, humble thy self like the Ninevites, Jonah 3.6. Who put sackcloath upon their Loins, and Ashes upon their Heads, as those that deserved to be as far under ground as they were now above it. An Humble submission is the onely way to disarm Gods indignation, and be rid of his Rod. 1 Pet. 5.6. Sin bringeth judgement, and only judgement preventeth it, thy Sin hath kindled the fire of Gods Wrath, and only Repentance is as Water to quench this fire. King Edward the first Riding furiously after a Servant of his that had displeas'd him, with a drawn Sword in his hand, as purposing to kill him, seeing him submit, and upon bending Knee sue for his Life, not onely spared him, but received him again into favour. Go thou and do the like, be thou but throughly sorrow for thy sin, my Soul for thine, God will be throughly satisfied, yea grow thou better by it, and God will love thee better for it, for as Lovers are best Friends after falling out, so when God and we are reconciled by repentance, his affections are stronger to us then before: the repenting Prodigal received such tokens of Favour, as his Elder Brother

who never brake out into riot never did: and whom did Christ honour with his first appearance, but Mary Magdalen and the Angel, but Peter? Go saith he and tell his Disciples, and tell Peter that he will go before you into Gallilee, Mark 16. 7. Though Peter had Sined above the rest, yet repenting he is named above the rest.

Secondly, Afflictions serve to work in us amendment of Life, every Affliction Sanctified Rubs off some Rust, melts off some Drosse, straines out some Corruption, &c. Which done we rise out of trouble as Christ rose out of the Grave, for when the Gold is fined, the fire shall hold it no longer. The outward cold of Affliction doth greatly increase the inward heat and fervour of the Graces of God in us: indeed no Chastisement saith Saint Paul for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous. But afterwards it bringeth the quiet fruits of Righteousnesse to them that are thereby exercised, Heb. 12. 11. God beats us that he may better us, he hedgeth us about with Thorns that he may keep us within Compasse, lest we break over into Satans Pasture, which indeed would but fat us for the slaughter. God strips the Body of plea-

sure

ſure to cloath the Soul with Righteouſneſſe, and oftentimes ſtrengthen our ſtate of Grace by Impoveriſhing our Temporal eſtate, for commonly the more Proſperity the leſſe Piety. The Poor ſaith Chriſt receive the Goſpel, though the Rich are more bound. Few men can digeſt great felicity, many a Man hath been a looſer by his gains, and that that which multiplyed his outward eſtate hath abated his inward, and ſo on the contrary David was never ſo tender as when he was hunted like a patridge, 1 Sam. 26. 20. Jonah was at beſt in the Whales Belly: Stevens face never ſhone ſo fair as when he ſtood before the Counſel, Acts 6. 15. Now if the Winter of the one is found to be the ſpring of the other, and the Corruption of Proſperity the Generation of Piety, who will eſteem thoſe things good which make us worſe, or that evil which brings ſuch gain and ſweetneſſe? Before I was afflicted, ſaith David, I went aſtray, but now I keep thy Commandment, Pſal. 119. 67. Theſe evils do preſs us, but it is to God and holineſſe, yea how much lower our Afflictions weigh us down on Earth, ſo much the more earneſtly our affections mount

up

up to Heaven. Devotion like fire in frosty weather burns hotest in Affliction. When the Waters of the flood came upon the face of the Earth, down went stately Turrets and Towers, but as the waters rose, the Ark rose still higher and higher, in like sort when the waters of affliction arise, down goes the Pride of Life, the Lust of the Eyes: in a word, all the vanities of the world, but the Ark of the Soul ariseth as these waters rise, and that higher even neerer and neerer towards Heaven. Oh! admirable use of Afflictions, Health from a wound, cure from a disease, out of greif joy, gain out of losse, out of Infirmity strength, out of sin, Holinesse: out of death Life, yea we shall redeem something of Gods dishonour by sin, if we shall thence grow more Holy: But,

Thirdly, They serve to quicken our Devotion, and make us pray unto God with more fervency: Lord saith Isaiah, in trouble they will visit thee, they poured out prayers when thy chastning was upon them, Isa. 26. 16. In their affliction saith Hosea they will seek thee diligently, Hos. 5. 15. That we never pray so feelingly, fervently, forcibly as in time of afflicti-

affliction, may be seen in the examples of the Children of Israel, Judges 3. 9, 15. Elisha, 2 Kings 6. 18. Hezekiah, 2 Kings 19. 15, 16.

And Lastly, Jehosophat, who being told that there was a great multitude coming against him from beyond ỳ Sea, out of Aram: it follows ỳ Jehosophat feared, & set himself to fear the Lord, & proclaimed a fast throughout all Judea, yea they came out of all parts and joyn'd with him to enquire of the Lord, 2 Chron. 20. 3, 4. Neither doth it make us alone, which suffer, earnest in Prayer, but it makes others also labour in prayer to God for us, 2 Cor. 1. 10, 11. Again, Crosses are the files and whetstones that set an edge on our devotions, without which they grow dull, and ineffectual: Jonah sleeps in the ship, but prays hard in the Whales belly: Prayer is the wing of the Soul, wherewith it flyes to Heaven, as meditation is the Eye wherewith we see God, but our Hearts are like flint-stones which must be smitten e're they will send forth these sparks of Devotion: Christ never heard of the Canaanitish Woman until her daughter was miserably vexed with a Devil, but then she comes to him and

doth

doth not speak but cry, need and desire have raised her voice to an importunate Clamour. The God of Mercy is light of hearing, yet he loves a loud and vehement solicitation, not to make himself inclinable to grant, but to make us Capable to receive Blessings, and indeed the very purpose of affliction is to make us Importunate. He that hears the secret murmures of our grief, yet will not seem to hear us till our crys be loud and strong: as Demosthenes would not plead for his Clyent till he cryed to him, but then answered his sorrow, now I feel thy cause. The child have escaped many a stripe by his loud crying, ỳ very unjust judge cannot endure the widdows Clamour: so unto fervent prayer God will deny nothing. Need will make us both humble and eloquent, if the case be woful it will be expresst accordingly, the despair of all other helps sends us importunately to the God of power, but while money can buy Physick, or friends procure enlargement, the great Physitian and helper is not sought unto, nor throughly trusted in. It is written of the Children of Israel, that so soon as they cried unto ỳ Lord he delivered them from their servitude under Eglon King of

Moab

Moab, yet it is plain they were eighteen years under this Bondage undelivered, Judges 3.14,15. Doubtlesse they were not so unsensible of their Misery, as not to complain sooner then the end of eighteen years, the first hour they sighed for themselves, but now they cryed unto God, they are words and not prayers that fall from careleſſe lips, if we would prevail with God we must wrastle, & if we would wrastle happily with God, we must Wrastle first with our own dullnesse, yea if we felt our wants or wanted not desire, we could speak to God in no tune but crys, and nothing but crys can pierce Heaven: affliction to ỹ soul is as plummets to a clock, and wind to a ship, holy and faithful, prayer as Oars to a Boat, & ill goes the Boat without Oars, or the ship without wind, or the clock without plummets. Now are some afflicted in reputation, as Susanna was, others in Children, as Ely, some by enemies, as David, others by friends, as Joseph, some in body as Lazarus, others in goods as Job, others in liberty as John. In all extremities let us send this Messenger to Christ for ease: faithful and fervent prayer, if this can but carry the burthen to him he will carry it for us, & from us for ever.

Fourthly;

Fourthly, Our sufferings wean us from the love of the world, yea make us loath and contemn it, and contrariwise fix upon Heaven, with a desire to be dissolved: St. Peter at Christs Transfiguration enjoying but a glimpse of happinesse, he was so ravished and transported with the love of his present estate that he breaks out into these words: It is good for us to be here, he would fain have made it his dwelling place, and being loath to depart, Christ must make 3 Tabernacles, Mat. 17. 4. The love of this world so makes us forget the world to come, that like the Israelites, we desire rather to live in the troubles of Ægypt, then in the Land of Promise: whereas S. Paul having spoken of his Bonds in Christ, and of the spiritual Combate, concludeth: I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ which is best of all, Phil. 1. 22, 23. Yea it transported him to heaven before he came thither, as Mary was not where she was but where her desire was, and that was with Christ, prosperity makes us drunk with the love of the world, like the Gadarrens who preferred their swine before their Souls, or him in the Parable that would go to see his

his Farm and loose Heaven, & thousands more, who if they have but something to leave behind them, 'tis no matter whether they have any thing to carry with them. But as sleep composeth drunkennesse, so the Crosse will bring a Man to himself again, for when the staff we nourish to bear us becomes a Cudgel to beat us, when we find the world to serve us as the Jews did Christ, carry us up to the top of a Hill and then strive to throw us down headlong, Luke 4. 29. When ỹ mind is so invested with cares, molested with grief, vexed with pain that which way so ever we cast our Eyes we find cause of Complaint, we more loathed the World than ever we lov'd it, when no man would harbour ỹ unthrift son in ỹ Gospel, he returned back again to his Father, but never before: when Satan is let loose upon us to shew us our sins, and the danger we are in, then farewel profit, farewel pleasure, treasure and all, rather then I will endure such a rack, such a hell in my conscience, whereas if we should carry hear of Misery, or read what is threatned in ỹ Word, though it might a little fright us, it would never amend us. A delicious life

when

when every thing about us is resplendent and contentful makes us that we have no desire to go to heaven, wherefore as a lovingmother when she would wean her Child from the Dugg, makes it bitter with Wormwood or Aloes, so deales ꝑ Lord with us, he maketh this life bitter unto us by suffering our enemies to persecute and oppresse us, to the end we may contemn the world, and transport our hopes from earth to heaven, he makes us weep in this vell of misery, that we may the more eagerly long for that place of felicity, where all tears shall be wiped from our Eyes. And this is no small abatement to the bitternesse of adversities, that they teach us the way to heaven, for the lesse comfort we find on earth the more we seek above, and the more we esteem the best th'ngs: and we are very ungrateful if we do not thank God for ꝑ which so overcomes us, as that it overcomes the love of the world in us. Nothing feeds Pride nor keeps off repentance so much as prosperous advantage. 'Tis a wonder to see a favourite study for ought but addition to his greatnesse, God shall have much a doe to make him know him-

himself. Many shal one day repent ꝑ they were happy too soon, many a Man cries out: O that I were so rich, so healthful, so quiet, so happy, &c. Alas though thou hadst thy wish for the present, thou shouldst perhaps be a looser in the sequel. A good man finding himself hated, persecuted afflicted, & tormented by enemies of all sorts he can as willingly leave the world, as others can forgo ꝑ Court, yea as willingly die as dine, yea no servant so desires ꝑ end of his years, no stranger so longs to be at home as he expects the promise of Christs coming, it is ꝑ strength of his hope, ꝑ swēt object of his faith, in ꝑ midst of all sorrows the comfort of his heart, ꝑ heart of all his comforts, the encouragement of his wearied spirits, the common Clausulre, the continual Period and shutting up of his prayers, come Lord Jesus come quickly.

Fifthly, The Lord permitteth his people to be often afflicted and assailed, to the end they may be always prepared for tribulation, as wise Marriers in a Calm make all their tackling sure and strong, that they may be provided against the next storm, which they cannot look to be long without, or as experienced Souldiers in time of peace, prepare for the day of Battel, and so much ꝑ rather, when

they lok every day for the approach of the enemy, the way to be safe is never to be secure, we are oft times set upon, to ỹ end that we may continually buckle unto us the whole Armor of God prescribed by Paul, Ephes. 6. 13, to 19. That we may be always ready for the Battel by Walking circumspectly, not as Fools but as Wise, Ephes. 5. 15. For as those that have no enemies to encounter them, cast their Armour aside & let it rust, because they are secure from danger, but when their enemies are at hand, and sound the Alarum they both wake and sleep in their Armor, because they would be ready for the assault, so if we were not often in skirmish with our enemies, we would lay aside our spiritual Armour, but when we have continual use of it, we still keep it fast buckled unto us, that being arm'd at all points we may be able to make resistance, that we be not be surprized at unawares; neither would it be good for us at present if we had not these enemies to stand in awe and fear of, but more inconvenient in divers respects, as wise Scipio that mirrour of wisdome told some, who with no small joy avouched ỹ the common wealth of Rome was now in safe estate, seeing they

they had vanquished the Carthaginians, and conquered the Inhabitants of Pontus, neither would he for that onely reason have Carthage destroy'd because it should hinder Rome from sleeping, yea God himself would have the Hitites, Gargesites, Amorites, Canaanites, Peresites, Hivites, and Jebusites; strong & warlike Nations to be in ỳ midst of Israel, lest Israel should sleep in sin and want matter for exercise, fight and conquest here, may be felicity with security never with safety.

The time when the envious man did sow his seed was whilst Men were in bed, no Servants more orderly use their Masters Talent, then those that ever fear their masters suddain return, no housholder more safe then he who at every watch suspects ỳ Thiefs entring, Sampson could not be bound till he was first got asleep, wouldst thou not be overcome be not secure flye from the works of darkness at a great distance, and consider as well the bitternesse of what will follow, as ỳ sweetnesse of a momentary pleasure, an assaulted City must keep a careful watch or it will not long hold out, yea the provident Fenman mends his Banks in Summer lest his Ground be drown'd in the winter,

and we must so take our leaves of all afflictions, that we reserve a lodging for them and expect their return, and so much the rather because what hath been long expected falleth the easier, and evils præcogitated strike but weakly.

Sixthly, Afflictions discovers what we are, it make us experimentally know our selves, and be known of others, whether we be true believers or Hypocrites.

First, Our selves, divers play Alexander on the Stage, but few or none in the field, many can suffer Martyrdome in speculation, who being put to it cannot concoct a foul Word, we are all Valiant Souldiers till we come to fight, excellent Philosophers, till we come to dispute; good Christians, till we come to master our own Lusts, but it is oppositon that gives the tryal, when corruptions fight against the graces, many while wealth last are very honest men & square dealers, at least seem so, yea they will maintain that all hardnesse is to be endured rather then conscience violated or God offended, but fall they into Poverty, & then ý they may maintain themselves, they will lye, deceive, steal, prostitute their Chastity, sell their Consciences, and what not, even

Hazael

Hazael before he met with an opportunity could say, What is thy Servant a Dog? & *Balaam* could brag; though thou wouldst give me thine house full of Gold, I would not, &c. Yet when it came to the tryal, he did as bad for little or nothing, but a man is indeed what he is in tryal, if our souls shall like of Christ for a Suitor when we find no other joynture but the Crosse we are sure we are Christians.

Secondly, That others may know us, a Souldier is best known in the front of a battle, a Pilot in a storm, a nimble active man in a Race, and a Champion in the Lists. How well the strings of an Instrument are tuned & set, is best known when they are touched by the hand of a skilful Musitian: There must be differences amongst you, saith S. Paul, ỳ the approved may be known, 1 Cor. 11. 19. For as thrashing seperates the straw, and winnowing ỳ Chaffe from the Corn, so persecution seperates the Hypocrite from the Company of Believers, Luke 22. 31. When a serving-man follows two men walking together, we cannot tell which is his Master till they part, so when the Gospel and outward prosperity go together it is hard to judge which is most respected. We all

call our selves Christians. Why it is an honourable thing to be so accounted, but who are such is known onely where the power of Godlinesse is in contempt. Oh how wicked men manifest their hatred & enmity against God and his people, so soon as persecution ariseth because of ỹ word. There is no tryal of friendship but in adversity, he ỹ is not ashamed of my Bonds nor daunted with my Checks, nor alienated with my disgrace is a friend for me, one dram of ỹ mans love is worth a world of Inconstant formality, but the friend is false hearted, who observes me onely for his own ends, affliction trieth whether a man hath grace in his heart or no, set an empty Pitcher (the resemblance a wicked man) to ỹ fire it crack presently, whereas the full (which resembles the Child of God) will abide boyling afflictions, are the waters wher our Gideon will try whether we are fit Souldiers to fight the Battel of faith. A faithful wife said Bradford is never try'd so to be until she be assaulted, nor a faithful Christian so approved till proved by affliction. None but a regenerate heart can chuse rather to suffer affliction with the People of God, rather then to enjoy the pleasures of Sin for a

season;

season. A litle intreaty will serve to move Nature to be good to it self: but to persist, in actions of goodnesse, though Tiranny torment death and hell stood in our way, this is that which shall be Crown'd with Glory: finally, affliction and persecution is both a whetstone and touchstone to each particular Grace, it humbles the spirits of the repentant, trieth the faith and patience of the sincere Christian, but hardeneth the hearts of the ungodly, for wicked men grow worse after affliction as water growes cold after any heat, yea like some beasts they are mad with baiting, if crosses or losses rush in upon them they fall to the Language of Job's Wife, Curse God and dye; or to that of the King of Israels Messenger, Why should I serve God any longer, 2 Kings 6. 33.

Seventhly, The Lord by this evil of Chastisement for sins past, preventeth the evils of sin, and greater punishments for the time to come, we are chastened of the Lord saith the Holy Ghost that we might not be condemned in the world, 1 Cor. 11. 32. If we be not chastened here we shall be condemned hereafter, erring souls be Corrected that they may be Converted, not confounded. If Paul had not been

buffeted by Satan and wicked men; he had been exalted out of measure, 2 Cor. 12.7. Pride is so dangerous a poison, that of another poison there was confected a counter-poison to preserve him from it, God would rather suffer this chosen vessel to fall into some infirmity, then to be proud of his singular privileges. Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance, through the abundance of Revelations (there was ỳ poison of Pride insinuating it self) I had a Thorn in the flesh, the Messenger of Satan to buffet me, there was the Counter-poyson or Antidote which did at once make him both sick and whole, yea we gain strength by every new fall, from hence issues deeper Humiliation, stronger hatred of sin, fresh indignation against our selves, more experience of ỳ deceitfulnesse of our hearts, renewed resolutions, until sin be brought under, but my purpose is to speak chiefly of affliction, not sin: Bodily sicknesse, saith St. Gregory cleanseth away sins committed, and hindreth those that in health might have been committed, the flesh indeed is nourished by softnesse, but ỳ spirit by hardnesse, that is fed by delights and pleasures, this groweth by Bitternesse,

and

and hereupon when a religious man prayed, John the Anchorite to free him of a certain Ague, he answered him, truly thou desirest to have a very necessary Companion cast out of doors, for saith he, as Cloaths are wash'd with sope, so is the mind purified by diseases, & the same may be covered of all kinds of crosses, for is it not comonly seen ỳ the pleasures of the Body are the poisons of the Soul: heap riches and honours upon an evil man, you do but Minister wine to him that hath a fever: saith Aristotle, Honey to one oppressed with Choller, and Meat to one troubled with Morbus Cophaliacus, which increaseth ỳ disease, saith Plutarch: for as Noah was drunk with his own wine, so the cup of prosperity hath intoxicated many a soul, & God hath no worse servants in our Land then they, that can live of their Lands, & care for nothing else, comonly where is no want is much wantonnesse, & as we grow rich in temporals, we grow poor in spirituals. Nabal cannot abound but he must surfeit. Tertulus cannot be Eloquent, but he must turn the edge of his wit against the Gospel. Many cannot have beauty but they must love their faces more then their souls. The enjoyment of ỳ worlds peace might add to my content, but

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it will endanger my soul. How oft doth the recovery of the body, state or mind, occasion a relapse in the Soul. All the life of Solomon was full of prosperity, & therefore we find ỳ Solomon did much forget God, but ỳ whole life of David had many enemies and much adversity, and therefore we see by his penitential Psalms, and others, that David did much remember God. & indeed if God did not often visit us we should serve him as ỳ women of Tartary do their husbands, who Marry if they be absent but Twenty days: but the fire of correction eats out the rust of corruption, many are able to say they have learned to stand by falling, got strength by weaknes, burnt child dreads the fire, & a broken bone well set is faster ever after, like Trées we take déeper rot by shaking and like Torches we flame the Brighter for bruising and knocking, God suffered Satan to spoil Job of his substance, rob him of his Children, punish him in the body; yet mark but the sequel well and you shall find that he was crost with a blessing, as the Physitian in making of Treacle or Mithridate for his patient, useth serpents adders and such like poyson, that he may drive out one poyson with another, even so our spiritual Physitian is pleas'd to use the

Malice

Malice of Satan and wicked men; when he tempereth us the Cup of affliction, that thereby he may expel one evil with another: yea two evils with one: namely, the evil of sin, and the evil of punishment, and that both Temporal and Eternal, God suffers us to be afflicted because he will not suffer us to be damn'd, such is the goodnesse of our heavenly Father to us, that even his anger proceeds from Mercy, he scourgeth the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 5. 5. Yea Joseph was therefore abased in the Dungeon that his advancement might be the greater. It is true in our thoughts, we often speak for the flesh, as Abraham did for Ishmael: Oh! ℔ *Ishmael* might live in thy sight: No, God takes away Ishmael and gives Isaac, he withdraws the pleasure of the flesh, & gives delight to ℔ Soul, strolling us in our wills, that he may advance our Benifit. A Man is sick of Pleurisie, the Physitian lets him Blood, he is content with it, the arm shall smart to ease the heart. The Covetous man hath a Pleurisie of Riches, God lets him blood by poverty, let him be patient, it is a course to save his soul. Though affliction be hard of Digestion to the natural man, yet the sheep of Christ know that to feed upon

on this salt Marsh is the onely preservative against the rot, ỳ experienced Christian knows that it is good for the soul, ỳ the body is somtimes sick, & therefore to have his inward man cured, he is content his outward man should be diseased, & cares not so the sin of his soul may be lessened, though the sores of his flesh be increased, it is better saith S. Hierom to have a sick stomack then a grieved mind, yea he desires with Saint Augustine ỳ God will send him any plague rather then the plague of ỳ Heart, and why is it not so with thee? I hope thou desirest thy souls safety above all, and thou knowest the stomack that is purged must be content to part with some good nourishment, ỳ it may deliver it self of more evil humour. Of what kind soever sufferings be, it is doubtlesse the fittest for thy souls recovery, or else God the onely wise Physitian would not apoint it; now who would not be willing to Bleed, when by ỳ means an inveterate sickness may be prevented? yea it is a happy bloodletting which saves the life, which made S. Augustine say unto God: Let my Body be Crucified, or Burnt, or do with it what thou wilt, so thou save my soul. And another, Let me swim through a River of Boyling Brimstone to live eternally

nally happy, rather then dwell in a Paradise of pleasure to be damned after death.

Eightly, That we may have an humble conceit of our selves, & wholy depend upon God. We received the sentence of death in our selves saith the Apostle, because we should not trust in our selves, but in God ỳ raiseth us up from ỳ dead, 2Cor.1.9. When Babes are afraid, they cast themselves into ỳ Arms & Bosome of their Mother. A Hen leading her Chickens into the sun, they fall a playing with ỳ Dust, she may cluck them to her long enough they will not come, but when they see the Kite, then they come without calling, and so it fares with Gods Children, till affliction comes the prodigal never thought of his Father till he wanted Husks, the Widdow ỳ is left alone trusteth in God, saith ỳ Apostle, 1Tim.5.5. Who when she had an Husband leaned too much upon him, the poor man depends not upon the relief of others till he finds nothing at home, till our means is spent we are apt to trust in uncertain riches, but after in ỳ name of the Lord, Zeph.3.12. Asa bore himself bold upon his forces, as being five hundred and fourscore thousand strong, till he was overmatch'd with an Army of a thousand thousand Ethiopians, this made him

cry:

cry: Help us O Lord our God for we rest on thee, 2 Chron. 14. I thought in my prosperity, saith David, I shall never be moved but thou didst hide thy face & I was troubled, then cryed I unto thee: It is high time to humble them that do not find themselves to stand in need of God, who so nourisheth his Servant daintily from his Childhood, shall after find him stubborn in prosperity; We are apt to think our selves men good enough, we see not our need of God, but let him send the Crosse it confutes us presently of our nothingnesse: even St. *Paul* was sick of this disease, he began to be puft up until the Messenger of Satan was sent to take him down, 2 Cor. 12. 7. And St. *Peter*, Math. 26. 33. Though all men should forsake thee yet I will never forsake thee, bravely promised, but *Peter* ỳ same night sware I know not the man, cowardly answered; It is one thing to suffer in speculation and another in practice. It is common for men to brag and crack of what they can do, yea one that hath but a wooden head and leaden heart, how will he help it out with a brazen face, and a golden hand: for being as great in Pride as he is small in desert, he will keep a doe in an audacious Masterlynesse, as if with Symon Magus he would beat

beat down all with large proffers, but this cannot be so pleasing to Nature as it is hateful to God, neither can there be a worse sign of ensuing evil, than for a man in a Carnal presumption to vaunt out his own abilities: how justly doth God suffer ỳ man to be foiled purposely that he may be ashamed of his own vain self confidence. It hath been profitable for proud men saith St. Augustine to fall into some grosse offence, for they have not lost so much by their fall as they have got by being down, it is better to be humble under sin then to be proud of grace, of ỳ two to be a *Pharisee* is worse than to be a Publican, to be proud of good endowments is worse then to have neither pride nor good endowments, yea in this case ỳ party is not onely bettered, but others learn humility thereby, for who can do other than yearn and fear to see so rich and goodly a vessel split as David or Solomon was.

Again it makes us pitiful and compassionate to others, they (said Sophocles) are usually the most compassionate to others, who have suffered miseries themselves, & what saith the Tyrian Queen: Evils have taught me to bemoan all that affliction makes to groan.

And

And Lastly, The Devil hereby is cheated, who if he cannot beat us down with sin, will blow us up with pride. He will undermine us if he cannot overthrow us. And nothing doth more advantage Satan than pride: For first, a man shall never be a proficient that thinks himself already sufficient. Secondly, When he can poyson our good works with Pharisaism, he makes us by overvaluing them to loose them, confidence in God doth onely support us, without him we are like Vines unpropt, which on the earth do crawl, if we escape temptation it is his mercy, if our wills consent not, 'tis his mercy, if we consent & the act be hindred tis his mercy, if we fall and rise again by repentance, all is his mercy, neither are we sufficient of our selves to think much less to speak, lest of all to do ŷ which is good, 2 Cor. 3. 5. We have no good, we do no good, but we may we must thank grace for it, which is al in all, yea can bear no fruit saith our Saviour except ye abide in me, John 15. 4. Ye more expressly, without me, ye can do nothing, ver. 5. So that we cannot put too much trust in him nor too little in our selves: So proud are we by nature ŷ before we come to the Tryal we think ŷ we can repel the strongest assault,

and

and overcom all enemies by our own power, but when we feel our selves vanquished and foyled by every small temptation, we learn to have a more humble conceit of our own ability, and to depend wholy on the Lord, God will not give his over til he hath made them kisse ẏ Rod which the wicked bite, and when he hath brought us to this, the greater submission the more grace, if there be one hollow in the Valley lower then another thither the waters gather, & the more lowly we are in Gods eyes, the more lovely we are, the more despicable in our selves, the more acceptable in him.

Ninthly, That we may be conformable to Christ our Head, & like our elder Brother who was consecrated through afflictions, reviled, bufeted, spit upon, Crucified, what not, for ẏ Scribes were against him, the Pharisees against him, ẏ rulers banded themselves against him, ẏ Atheists against him, Herod & all ẏ spiteful & envious Jews against him, whose birth was mean, whose life was contemptible, & whose death was ignominious, yea his pallace was a stable, his Courtiers Beasts, his chair of state a Manger, his royal Robes a few rags, no Bells Ring, no Bone-fires proclaim his birth through the populous streets, no great Ladys came to visit his mother, & answer-

able to his ingresse into the world, was his progresse in it, & his Egresse out of it. And we must suffer with him that we may be also glorified with him, Rom. 8. 17. When the Jews offered Jesus Gall and Vinegar he tasted and would not drink, he left the rest for his Church & they must pledge him, whosoever saith our Saviour beareth not his Crosse and commeth after me cannot be my Disciple, Luke 14. 27. For hereunto are ye called saith St. Peter, for Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example ý we should follow after his steps, 1 Pet. 2. 21. Ye S. Paul made this the most certain Testimony and seal of his adoption here & glory afterwards, having delivered that the spirit of God beareth witnesse with our spirits that we are the Children of God, and having added, if we be Children we are also Heirs, even Heirs of God, & joint heirs with Christ, then he useth these words, If so be that we suffer with him that we also may be glorified with him, making suffering as a principal condition annexed, which is as if he had said: It is impossible we should be Glorified with him, except we first suffer with him, Rom. 8. 16, 17. Wherupon having reckoned up all privileges which might Minister unto him occasion of boasting he concludeth ý what things were gain unto him,

him, those he accounted loss for Christ, ẏ he might know ẏ fellowship of his sufferings, & be made conformable to his death, Phil. 3. 10. so ẏ as he bare his Cross before he wore his crown, & began to us in ẏ cup of his fathers displeasure, so we must pledge him our part, & fill up ẏ which is behind of his sufferings, Col. 1 14. Suffering is the way to reigning, through many Tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, Acts 14. 22. And indeed who would not be ambitious of the same entertainment that Christ himself had, yet our sufferings as they are nothing to what our sins have deserved, so they are nothing to what our Saviour hath suffered, for he endured many a little Death all his life long for our sakes & at length ẏ painful & cursed death of the Crosse, to say nothing of the soul of his sufferings, which his Soul then suffered when he sweat clots of blood in the garden, now why must we pledge our Saviour & fill up the measure of his sufferings, not that Christs sufferings are incompleat nor to satisfie Gods justice for sin, for ẏ is done already once for all by him who bare our sins in his body on the tree, neither doth God afflict his Church for any delight he takes in their trouble, for he afflicts not willingly, Lam 3. 33. Jer. 31. 20. Isa. 63. 9. Nor yet to

shew his soveraignty, Isa. 45. 9. Nor is it meerly for his own glory, without any other respect, but out of pure necessity & abundant love to us, as the reasons both before & after shew. wherefore let us be exhorted in the words of St. Peter, to rejoyce in suffering, forasmuch as we with all the saints are partakers of Christs sufferings, that when his Glory shall appear we may be glad and rejoyce, 1 Pet. 4. 13. And what greater promotion can flesh & blood be capable of, than a conformity to the Lord of glory. Christ wore a Crown of Thorns for me, & shal I grudge to wear this paper cap for him, said John Huss, when they put a cap upon him that had ugly devils painted on it, with the title of Heresie. Never did neck-kerchief become me so well as this Chain, said Alice Drivers, when they fastned her to ỳ stake to be burnt, & what said a French Martyr when a rope was put about his fellows neck? give me that Gold Chain, & dub me a Kt. of that noble order.

Tenthly, Afflictions serve to encrease our faith for the time to come, when we consider how the Lord hath delivered us formerly: as when Saul tells David thou art not able to go against this great Philistine to fight with him, for thou art a Boy, & he a

man

man of War from his youth, what saith David? thy servant kept his fathers Sheep & there came a Lyon, & likewise a Bear, & took a Sheep out of the flock, & I went out after him & smote him, & took it out of his mouth, & when he rose against me I caught him by the Beard, & smote him & slew him; so thy servant slew both the Lyon and the Bear. Therefore (mark the Inferrence) this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, yea (saith he) the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the Lyon, & out of the paw of the Bear, he will deliver me out of ỹ hands of this Philistine, 1 Sam. 17.33, to 37. Observe how confidently he speaks: God hath delivered me saith Paul out of the mouth of ỹ Lyon (meaning Nero) & he will deliver me from every Evil Work, & will preserve me unto his Heavenly Kingdome, 2 Tim. 4. 17, 18. That tree is deepest rooted in the Earth which is most shaken with the Winds, and they weak usually that are planted in pleasant Valleys, so the tree of faith, the more it is shaken with the violent storms of trouble, the faster it becomes rooted by Patience, he can never be a good Souldier that never hath felt the toyl of a Battel: the more deliverances David had the greater was

his faith, for after ꝯ Lord had delivered him often out of extream exigents, namly from this great Goliah, ꝯ cruelty of Saul, ꝯ unnatural insurrection of Absolom, & the unjust curses of Shimei, he was able to say: I trust in God, neither will I fear what man can do unto me, Psal. 56. 4. & in Ps. 3. I will not be afraid for ten thousand of the people that should beset me round, & in Ps. 18. 29. By thee I have broken through an Host, & in thy name have I leaped over a Wall: we men indeed therefore shut our hands because we have open'd them, making our former kindnesse arguments of sparing afterwards, but contrariwise, God therefore gives because he hath given, making his former favours arguments for more: that we may live by faith & not by sence, he first strips us of all our earthly confidence, and then gives us Victory, & not before; lest he should be a looser in our gain, his help useth to shew it self in extremity, Daniel is not delivered at the beginning of his trouble, he must first be in the lyons den, & then he finds it, those three servants, Dan. 3. 26. are not rescued at the Ovens mouth in the Furnace they are, that is a gracious & well tried faith, that is able to hold out with confidence to the last,

like

like Abraham, who is said to hope against Hope, Rom. 14.18. Which with God is a thing much set by, yea, such he acounts his Champions & worthies, whence it is many are trained up in trouble all their days, as it fared with David, for as a Bear came to David after a Lyon, & a Gyant after a Bear, & a King after a Gyant, & Philistines after a King, & all to make him more hardy and confident in his God: so when they that are intended for Christs Champions, have fought with the Devil & their own Lusts, they shall fight with Envy, when they have fought with Envy, they shall fight with Poverty, when they have fought with Poverty they shall fight with Infamy, when they have fought with Infamy, they shall fight with sickness, when they have fought with sickness, they shall fight with death like a Labourer ý is never out of Work, & this not onely proves but mightily improves their faith: & indeed till we have been delivered out of a less trouble, we cannot trust God in a greater. As the Prophet could say: Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, Instantly follows (and not till then) the Lord heard me, the Lord saw him sinking all the while, but lets him alone till he was at the bottom.

In the Elevnth place: Our manifold sufferings, and Gods often delivering us, doth increase our joy & thankfulnesse, yea, make after blessings more sweet, by this we have new songs put into our Mouths, & new occasions offered to praise the Authour of our deliverance, when the Lord brought again the Captivity of Sion (saith David in the person of Israel) we were like them that dream) (meaning the Happinesse seemed too good to be true) then were our Mouths fil'd with laughter (saith he) and our tongues with joy, the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we rejoyce, Psal. 126. 1. 2, 3, 4. Is any one afflicted, I will say to him as that harbinger answered a Noble man, complaining that he was lodged in so homely a Room, you will take pleasure in it when we are out of it, for the more grievous our exigent, the more glorious our advancement. A desire accomplished delighteth the soul, Prov. 13. 19. We read how that lamentable & sad decree of Ahashuerus through the goodnes of God was an occasion exceedingly to increase the Jews joy & thankfulness, insomuch that as the Text saith: The days that were appointed for their death & ruine were turned into days of feasting and joy.

and

and wherein they sent presents every man to his neighbour, & gifts to the poor, Esth. 9. 17, to 28. And this joy & thankfulnesse was so lasting ỳ the Jews cease not to celebrate the same unto this day: Gods dealing with us is often harsh in ỳ begining, hard in the procéding, but the Conclusion is always comfortable; the joy of Peter & the rest of the Church was greater after he was delivered out of prison by the Angel, Acts 12. And the joy of Judith & the rest of Bethalia when she returned with Holofernes head, then if they had never béen in distresse, Judith 13. The Lord deprives us of good things for a time because they never appear in their full Beauty till they turn their backs & be going away: Again he defers his aid on purpose to encrease our desires before it comes, & our joy & thankfulness when it is come to inflame our desires, for things easily come by are little set by to encrease our joy for that which hath béen long detained, is at last more sweetly obtained, what (think we) did he that was born blind think when his eyes were first given him, how did he wonder at heaven and earth, the strange and goodly varieties of all the Creatures, & chearfulnesse of the light, every th'ng did not more

please

please then astonish him, as Mothers love their Children more tenderly then Fathers, because they find them in more, so we prize the comforts and joys of Gods favour more by having for a season bèn deprived of them through afflictions & desertions. The benefit that comes soon & with ease is easily contemned long & eager pursuit endears any favour. The wise men rejoyced exceedingly to find the star, the woman to find her piece of silver, the Virgin Mary to find the Lord Jesus, who always returneth with increase of joy. He may absent himself for a time, but he intends it only as a preparation to make us relish that sweet food, the better he may kèp us fasting, but it is on purpose that our tryal may be perfect, our deliverance welcome, our Repentance glorious, we never know the worth of a Benefit so well as by the want of it, want teacheth us the worth of things most truly. Oh! how sweet a thing is peace to them that have bèn long troubled with wars and tedious contentions: how sweet is liberty to one that hath bèn long immured within a case of Walls? How dear a jewel is health to him that tumbles in distempered blood for then onely we begin to prize it when we have lost it: Let a man but fast a Meal

or

or two, O how sweet is brown bread, though it would not down before, we are never so glad of our friends company, as when he returns after long absence, or a Tedious Voyage. The Nights darkness makes the light of ỳ Sun more desirable, & a Calm is best welcome after a tempest. And thus we see that good things then appear of most worth, when they are known in their wants. And as when we would have some fires flame, ỳ more we sprinkle water upon them. Even so when the Lord will encrease our joy & thankfulness he allayeth it with the tears of affliction, misery sweetneth joy, yea the sorrows of this life shall like a dark veil give a lustre to the glory of the next, when the Lord shall turn this water of our earthly affliction into ỳ wine of gladness, wherewith our souls shal be satiate for ever. Well then art thou vexed, persecuted, & afflicted by some cruel and malitious Saul, & is it grievous to thée for the present, why that which hath béen hard to suffer is sweet to remember, at last our songs shall be louder then our cries.

In the Twelfth place: Our sufferings make us teachable, & increase in us spiritual wisdome, Job 36. 15. He delivereth ỳ poor in time of affliction, & openeth their ear in trouble, and again, Job 33. 16. He openeth

speneth the ears of men even by their corrections, we are best instructed when we are most afflicted, Pauls outward blindnes took away his inward blindnesse, & made him see more into the way of life then could all his learning at the feet of Gamaliel, and what saith Neoman upon the cleansing of his Leprosie, now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel: O happy Sirian ỳ was at once cured of his Leprosie, & his misprision of God: the prodigal son regarded not his fathers admonition so long as he enjoyed prosperity, when we smart not we believe not, and God is not feared till felt, but that which makes the Body smart makes the Soul wise, even to loose is some ways profitable, it makes a Man wary. Algerius the Martyr could say by experience he found more light in the dungeon then without in all the world: The Scottish King Prisoner in Mortimers hole learnt more of Christ then in his Pallace. Luther between a divine in outward pomp and a divine under the Crosse, neither could he understand some Psalms till he was in affliction: The Christs crosse is no letter, yet it taught him more understanding then all the letters in the row, ỳ crosse opens mens eyes as the tasting of Honey did

did Jonathans, yea what will not afflictions teach us? when even the Savagest beasts are made quiet and docible with abating their food and rest, or by adding of stripes, even as the clay with water, and the Iron with fire, are made pliable & apt to receive impression from the workman, even so when we are soaked in the floods of sorrow & softned in the fire of affliction, we are aptest to receive the impression of Gods law into our hearts, when he speaks to us by his Ministers: If ỹ Lord breaks us in pieces with the plow of his Justice, then let the sẽds men his Ministers sow ỹ sẽd of his word, we shall receive it through the furrowes of our ears into the Ground of our hearts, & grow up in wisdome & saving Knowledge, we hear & read much of the corruption of our natures odiousnesse, of our sins necessity, of a Saviours sweetnesse, of Gods love in Christ, &c. But we never fully apprehend these things, nor tast how good ỹ Lord is, till some sharp affliction comes: thus Gods corrections are our instructions, his lashes our lessons, his scourges our schoolmasters, his chastisements our advertisements, & comonly ỹ soul waxeth as the body waineth, & is wisest to prescribe when ỹ bons & sinews are weakest, to execute

ecute, neither do we hereby become wise for our own souls good onely, but afflictions make us wise, & able to do others good also ỳ are in any the like affliction. Blessed be God saith St. Paul who comforteth us in all our afflictions, ỳ we may be able to comfort them ỳ are in any affliction, by ỳ comfort wherewith we our selves are comforted of God, 2 Cor. 1. 4. Yea ỳ whole Church & every particular Member thereof have their wisdome & knowledge improved even by their greatest Enemies. Heresie makes men sharpen their wits ỳ better to confute it, as wormwood though it be bitter to ỳ taste, yet it is good to clear the eyes, yea the very storms of persecution makes us look to our Tackling patience, & to our Anchor hope, & to our Helm faith, & to our Card ỳ word of God, & to our Captain Christ, whereas security like a Calm makes us forget both our danger & deliverer, so that to be altogether exempt from misery is a most miserable thing.

Lastly, Our troubles & afflictions make for ỳ increase of our patience, we rejoyce in tribulation saith S. Paul, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, Rom. 5. 3. My Brethren saith St. James, count it exceeding joy when ye fall into divers temptations,

temptations, knowing that ꝑ tryal of your faith worketh patience, Jam. 1. 2. 3. Thus the malice of our enemies doth both prove & improve our patience, see it exemplified in Job & David, whose practise doth most excellently confirm this point, you know Job was not so miserable in his afflictions, as happy in his patience, Job 31. 35, 36. And David after he had bin so many years train'd up in ꝑ school of affliction, & exercised with continual sufferings, from innumerable enemies of all sorts, became a wonder of patience to all succeeding Ages, as take but notice of his carriage towards Shimei, & you will say so when this his impudent subject cursed & cast stones at him, & all his men of War call'd him Murtherer, wicked man, &c. He was so far from revenging it, when he might so easily, or suffering others, ꝑ you shall hear him make ꝑ an argument of his patience, which was ꝑ exercise of it, behold my son, saith he, which came forth of my bowels seeketh my life, how much more now may this Benjamite do it, ꝑ wickedness of an Absalom may rob his father of Comfort, but shall help to add to his Fathers goodness, what a load of injuries can some Christians digest that have been frequent in suffering, and long exercised in the School of Affliction. Now

Now if it be ſo as you have heard, that affliction by a divine and ſupream providence doth make ſo much for our advantage and benefit here and hereafter, as namely that it opens our eyes, no leſs than peace and proſperity had formerly ſhut them, that nothing doth ſo powerfully call home the Conſcience, and that we need no other memory for ſin beſides Miſery, if commonly we are at Variance with God, Men were at peace with our enemies, and that it is both hard and happy, not to be the worſe with Liberty. If God the alwiſe Phyſitian knows this the fitteſt Medicine for our Souls ſickneſs, and that we cannot otherwiſe be cured, if Pride cauſeth God to let us fall by temptation, that we may ſee our own frailty and weakneſſe, and grow more Humble. If Affliction will above all things make us pray to God with heat and fervency, if true and Saving Joy be onely the Daughter of ſorrow, if it weans us from the love of earthly things, if it diſcovers unto us the truth of our Graces, and prevents greater evils of ſin and puniſhment to come, if it makes us humble and conformable to Chriſt our Head, if it increaſeth our faith, our joy and thankfulneſs, our ſpiritual wiſdom and patience, if by ſmarting in our Bodies States or Names, we are ſaved from ſmarting in our Souls: Then as Solomon adviſeth: Refuſe not the Chaſtning of the Lord, neither be grieved with his Correction, Pro. 3. 11. But let us all willingly ſubmit to Gods afflicting hand, and ſuffer chearfully what is laid upon us, admiring at the infinite wiſdome, power, and goodneſs of our gracious God, who turns all our Poyſons into Cordials, who doth change our terrours into pleaſures, and makes the greateſt Evils Beneficial unto us. Conſider what hath been ſaid, and the Lord give you underſtanding in all things: Amen.

FINIS.

Now if it be ſo as you have heard, that affliction by a divine and ſupream providence doth make ſo much for our advantage and benefit here and hereafter, as namely that it opens our eyes, no leſs than peace and proſperity had formerly ſhut them, that nothing doth ſo powerfully call home the Conſcience, and that we need no other memory for ſin beſides Miſery, if commonly we are at Variance with Go

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